



Shringabhuja

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Based on a story from the Kathasaritsagara



Amar Chitra Katha

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Shringabhuja

Shringabhuja is a story from the Kathasaritsagara, a Sanskrit classic of the eleventh century, written by Somadeva. Prince Shringabhuja, the hero, in search of his father's golden arrow comes across a demoness Rupashikha. She falls in love with him and decides to help him. The result is a fascinating blend of the world of men and the world of demons, in which fantasy, adventure and romance hold the reader enthralled.

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Shringabhujja



KING VIRABHUJA OF VARDHAMANA RULED
OVER A FLOURISHING KINGDOM OF
HAPPY SUBJECTS SECURE IN THE
KNOWLEDGE OF A WISE AND JUST RULE.

THE KING HAD A HUNDRED WIVES, OF WHOM GUNAVARA WAS THE CHIEF QUEEN. THE KING WAS CHILDLESS, AND FELT UNHAPPY ABOUT IT.

I WORRY ABOUT MY KINGDOM. WHO WILL INHERIT IT?

IT IS A PITY, YOUR MAJESTY, THAT NOT ONE OF YOUR HUNDRED WIVES HAS BEEN ABLE TO GIVE YOU AN HEIR.



I CARE LITTLE ABOUT THE OTHERS. BUT I WISH YOU...

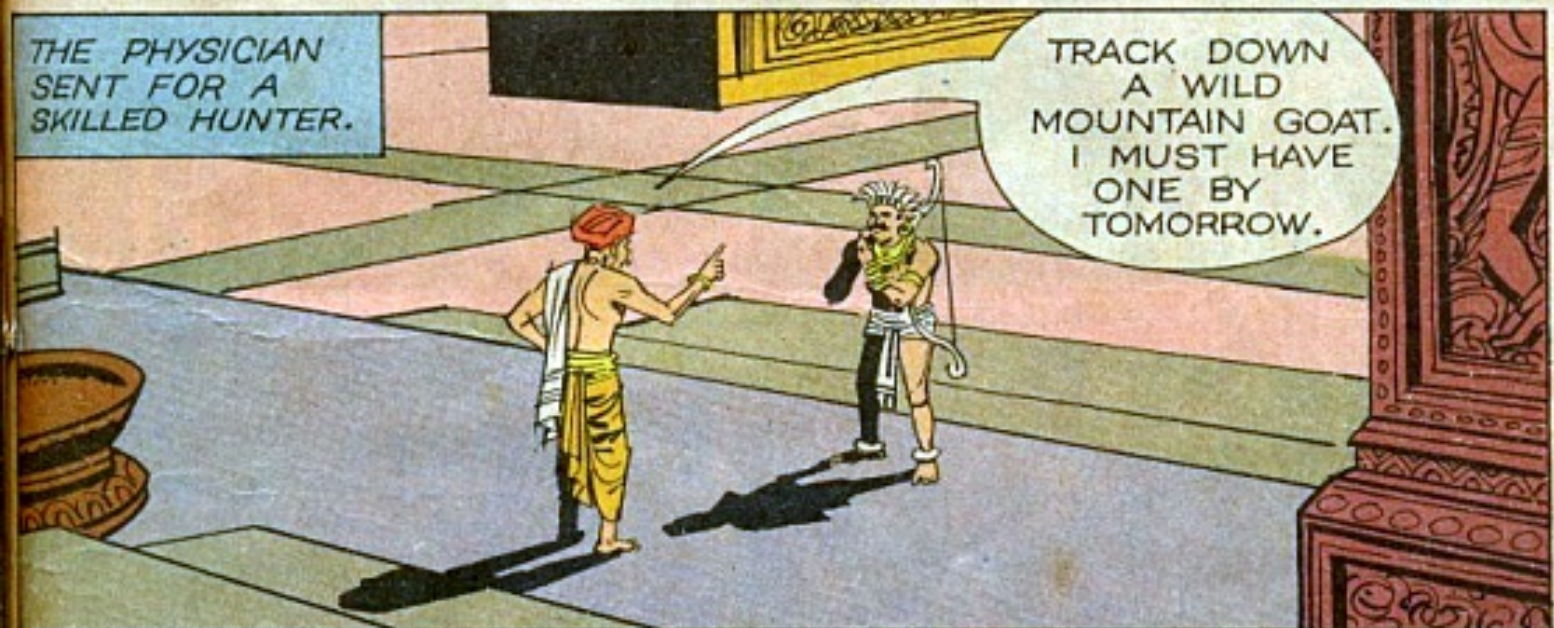
IT IS GOD'S WILL, MY LORD.

THE KING, HOWEVER, DID NOT RESIGN HIMSELF TO FATE. HE SENT FOR THE COURT PHYSICIAN.

YOU KNOW WHAT IS TROUBLING ME. IS THERE NO WAY?

THERE IS, YOUR MAJESTY.





THE QUEENS ASSEMBLED IN THE ROYAL DINING HALL. AVASOLEKHA, ONE OF THE QUEENS, NOTICED THAT GUNAVARA WAS NOT THERE.

GOOD. I HOPE SHE ARRIVES LATE. IF SHE HAS A SON, OUR CHILDREN DON'T STAND A CHANCE.



THE PHYSICIAN ANNOUNCED—

MY BREW IS READY!



THE PRIEST PRONOUNCED THE BLESSINGS...

ALL YOU QUEENS OF VIRABHUJA— MAY YOU BEAR HIM SPLENDID SONS!



...AND THE QUEENS DRANK UP THE MAGIC POTION.



JUST AS THE LAST CUP
HAD BEEN DRAINED—

QUEEN
GUNAVARA!
HOW COULD
WE HAVE
OVERLOOKED
HER?

THE KING
WILL NEVER
FORGIVE
US!



KING
VIRABHUJA
AND QUEEN
GUNAVARA
ARE HERE!

WHAT
SHALL WE
DO?



THE KING WAVED GUNAVARA
INTO THE ROOM.

MY QUEEN,
YOU HAVE FASTED
AND PRAYED FOR
THREE DAYS. MAY YOUR
DEVOTIONS MEET
WITH SPECIAL
SUCCESS.

HOW HE
DOTES
ON HER!





AS THE QUEENS, DREADING THE KING'S ANGER, HURRIED AWAY—



WHILE THE PHYSICIAN WAITED
FOR THE COOK TO ARRIVE—

MY LORD,
IF HE HAS SAVED
THE CREATURE'S
HORNS THERE
IS HOPE YET.

FOR
YOUR SAKE,
I HOPE
HE HAS!



THE COOK ARRIVED AND—

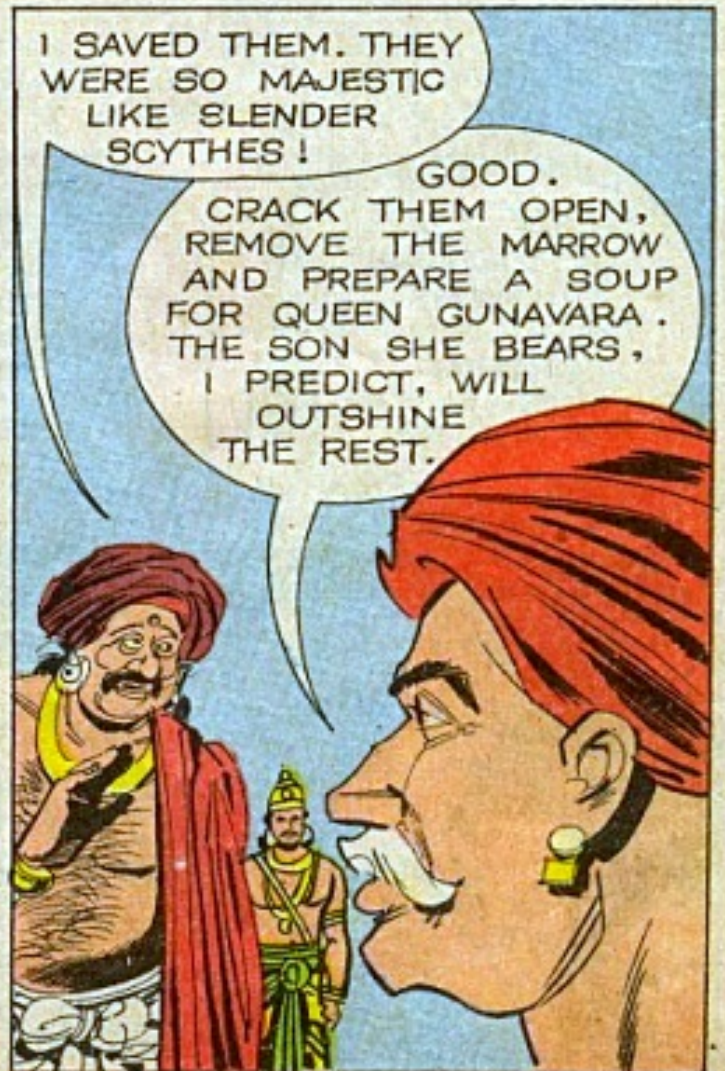
THERE
IS NO...

... BREW LEFT.
NEVER MIND.
HAVE YOU
THROWN AWAY
THE HORNS?

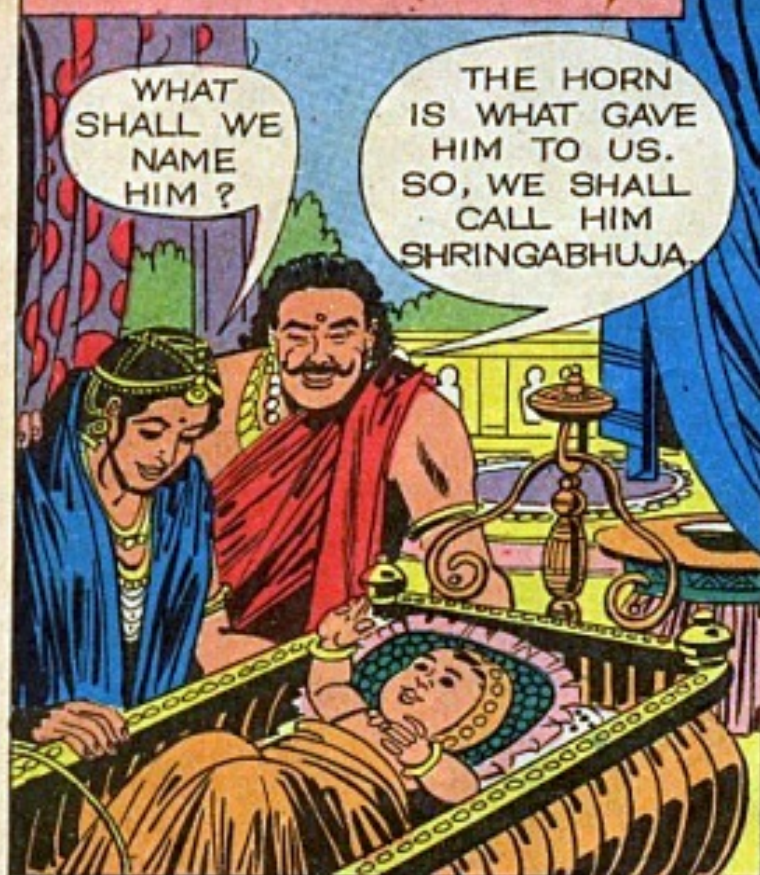


I SAVED THEM. THEY
WERE SO MAJESTIC
LIKE SLENDER
SCYTHES!

GOOD.
CRACK THEM OPEN,
REMOVE THE MARROW
AND PREPARE A SOUP
FOR QUEEN GUNAVARA.
THE SON SHE BEARS,
I PREDICT, WILL
OUTSHINE
THE REST.



HIS PREDICTION PROVED TRUE.



SHRINGABHUJA BECAME THE UNQUESTIONED FAVOURITE OF THE KING. THE QUEENS WERE JEALOUS.



AYASOLEKHA TOOK THE LEAD. SHE TALKED TO THE CHILDREN IN GROUPS, SPREADING HER JEALOUSY LIKE POISON.



AND AS FOR GUNAVARA, I WILL SEE THAT SHE FALLS FROM GRACE.



*'SHRINGA' MEANS 'HORN'

THAT NIGHT,
WHEN THE KING
VISITED HER—

YOU ARE NOT
YOUR USUAL
SMILING SELF.
WHAT'S WORRYING
YOU?

I DON'T KNOW
HOW TO SAY IT.
PROMISE YOU WON'T
BE ANGRY WITH ME.
ONLY THEN WILL I
TELL YOU.





THE KING HAD LEFT—ALMOST BEFORE SHE FINISHED HER SENTENCE.



THE KING PACED UP AND DOWN IN HIS APARTMENT, HIS THOUGHTS IN A FURIOUS TURMOIL.



SURAKSHITA WAS SENT FOR. TO HIS UTTER SURPRISE—

I HEAR YOU HAVE KILLED A MAN. YOU MUST ATONE FOR THIS GRIEVOUS SIN. YOU MUST TRAVEL TO THE HIMALAYAS AND WASH AWAY YOUR SINS IN THE WATERS OF THE HOLY GANGES.

THERE MUST BE SOME MISTAKE. I HAVE NOT KILLED ANYONE!

BUT THE KING IGNORED HIS PROTESTS.

THAT GETS RID OF HIM. NOW, FOR QUEEN GUNAVARA. THIS IS NOT GOING TO BE EASY.

HE SENT FOR QUEEN GUNAVARA.

MY LORD, YOU SEEM VERY DISTURBED.

I AM, MY DEAREST. THE ASTROLOGER SAYS YOU SHOULD BE IMPRISONED FOR A YEAR. FAILING THIS, I WILL DIE AND THE KINGDOM COME TO GRIEF.

IS THAT ALL, MY LORD? PREPARE THE DUNGEON AND I SHALL GO INTO IT ONLY TOO WILLINGLY.



WHEN SHRINGABHUJA HEARD THE NEWS—



AYASOLEKHA PUT THE REST OF HER WICKED PLAN IN ACTION. SHE CALLED HER SON, NIRVASABHUJA—



THE OPPORTUNITY SOON AROSE.
THAT VERY EVENING —

LOOK!
A MAGNIFICENT
CRANE. HE'S
FLYING QUITE
LOW TOO.



A PASSING MENDICANT
APPROACHED THEM.

THAT IS NO
ORDINARY CRANE.
IT IS AGNISHIKHA,
THE RAKSHASA KING.
IF YOU SHOOT HIM,
YOU WILL BE DOING
THE WORLD A
GOOD TURN.



THE PRINCES SHOT AT THE
BIRD, ONE BY ONE.

WE'VE
ALL
MISSED.

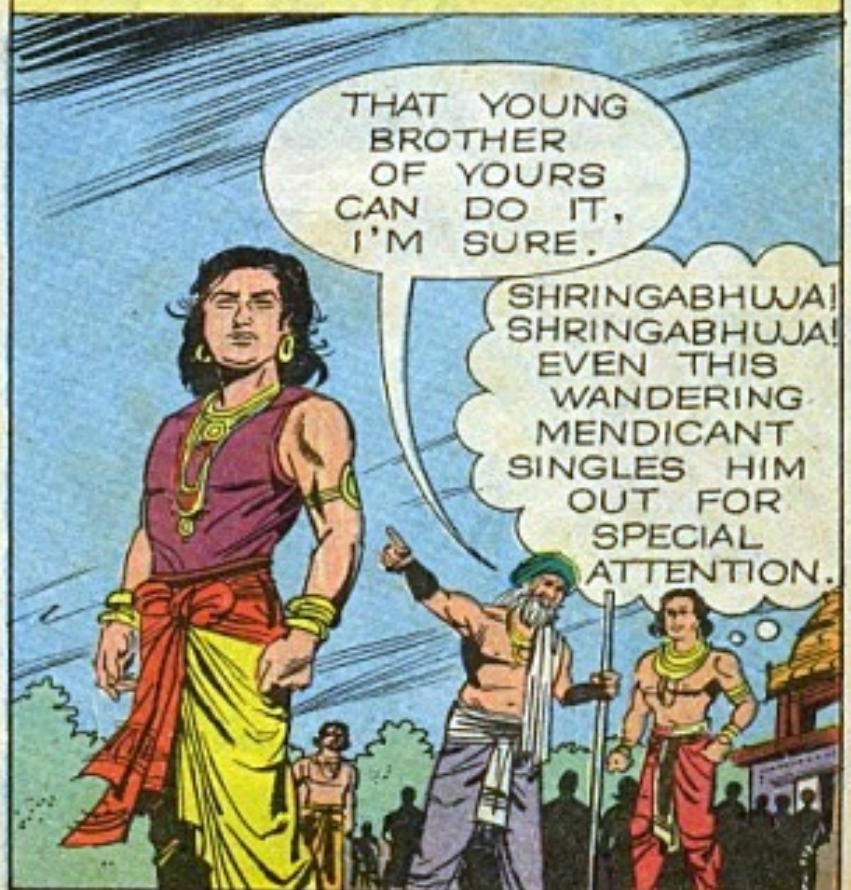


THE CRANE
IS STILL
CIRCLING.

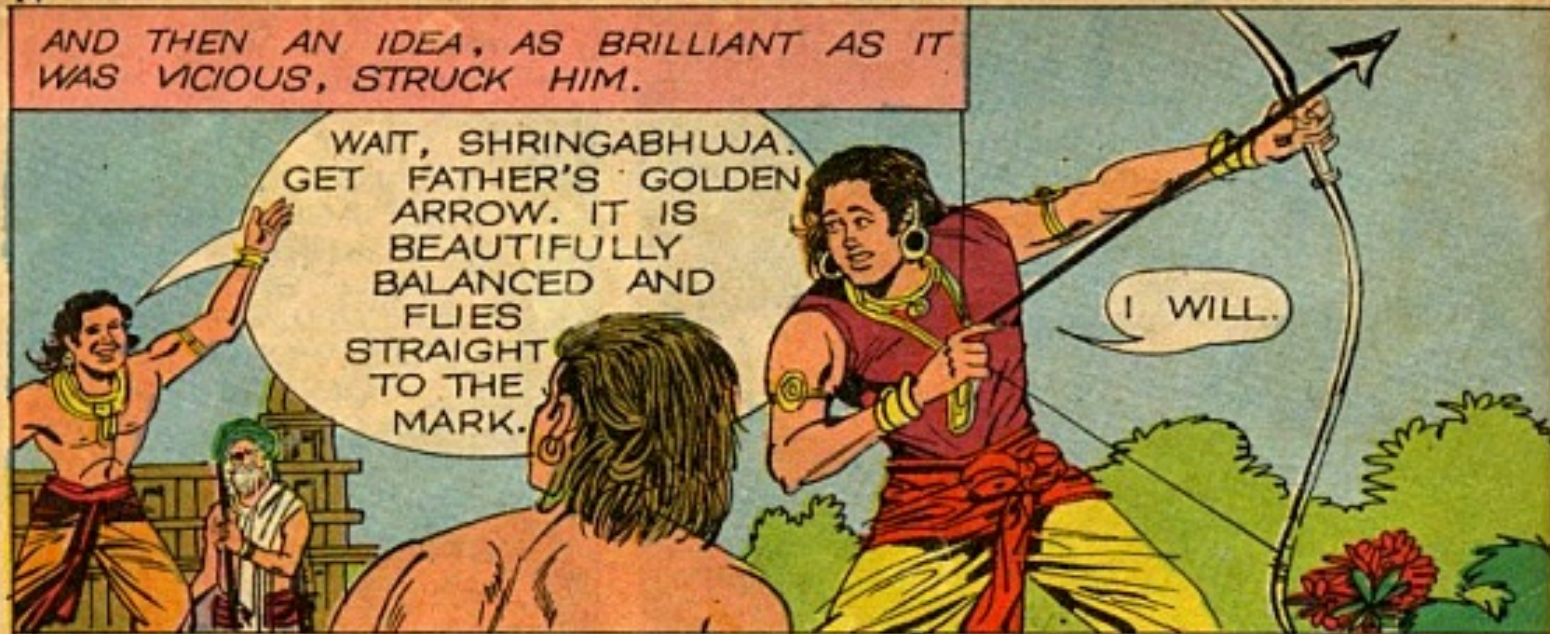
THE MENDICANT POINTED TO
SHRINGABHUJA WHO WAS STANDING
A LITTLE APART.

THAT YOUNG
BROTHER
OF YOURS
CAN DO IT,
I'M SURE.

SHRINGABHUJA!
SHRINGABHUJA!
EVEN THIS
WANDERING
MENDICANT
SINGLES HIM
OUT FOR
SPECIAL
ATTENTION.



AND THEN AN IDEA, AS BRILLIANT AS IT WAS VICIOUS, STRUCK HIM.



THE UNSUSPECTING SHRINGABHUJA RETURNED WITH THE WEAPON, TOOK AIM AND SHOT AT THE BIRD.



WHAT DO WE DO? WE DARE NOT FACE OUR FATHER. YOU HAD BETTER BRING THE ARROW BACK.

NEVER FEAR. I WILL NOT REST TILL I DO SO.



AND HE SET OFF.

HE FELL INTO THE TRAP SO EASILY.

HA! HA!



SHRINGABHUJA FOLLOWED THE BIRD. THE CRANE HAD LEFT A CLEAR TRAIL, FOR THERE WERE DROPS OF BLOOD ON THE EARTH.

MY FIRST TASTE OF THE OUTSIDE WORLD. STRANGE, BUT I AM NOT AFRAID.



Quiz

INDIA-6

Compiled by: Shobha Rao

III

NAME THE THINGS SHOWN
IN THE ILLUSTRATION.



I IDENTIFY THE MEN.

LATER —

REVERED DASA, YOU HAVE
MADE MUSIC SIMPLE AND SWEET.
HEREAFTER, YOURS WILL
BE THE FIRST SONG
THAT I WILL TEACH A
BEGINNER.



II IDENTIFY THE SPEAKERS.

WITHOUT MY STICKS,
I WILL NOT BE ABLE
TO PERFORM MY
RELIGIOUS DUTIES.

WE WILL TRACK DOWN THE DEER AND BRING
BACK THE STICKS TO YOU.



IV WHO IS THIS GREAT KING?

HE CONSTRUCTED TWO BUILDINGS WITHIN THE PRECINCTS OF THE PURANA GILA. ONE WAS A MOSQUE AND THE OTHER WAS THE SHER MANDAL.



V FILL IN THE BLANK.

THE WALLS OF THE LOWEST, WHICH WAS ON EARTH, WERE MADE OF IRON; THE WALLS OF THE SECOND, WHICH WAS IN THE SKY, OF SILVER; AND THE WALLS OF THE THIRD, WHICH WAS IN HEAVEN, OF GOLD.



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Giving: Name, Age, Address, Answers

Last date for receiving entries: 30.4.1987

Answers to Quiz India-5

- I. Alexander should not have been shown wearing his helmet.
- II. These words were addressed to Parvati by Shiva for not paying attention to what he was saying.
- III. Kannappa removes his own eye to replace Shiva's.
- IV. a. Pundalik b. Humayun
- V. Satyabhama.

THE TRAIL STOPPED SUDDENLY AND HE FOUND HIMSELF IN A GARDEN CITY, AMIDST DENSE JUNGLE.



INDEED, IT WAS. THE TREES WERE ALIVE WITH SINGING BIRDS AND LADEN WITH SWEET-SMELLING FLOWERS.



AND SUDDENLY, OUT OF THE EVENING MISTS—



AS SHE MOVED CLOSER—





THE EVENING WORE ON AS SHRINGABHUJA TOLD HER ALL THAT HAD HAPPENED.



YOU WILL,
IN GOOD TIME.
BUT WE MUST
FIRST GET
MARRIED.
I WANT YOU
TO BE MY
HUSBAND.

MY LIFE,
MY FORTUNES,
ARE YOURS.

MY DEAR
SHRINGABHUJA,
MY FATHER
IS AN OLD
RAKSHASA
AND NEEDS TO
BE TACKLED.
YOU WILL
SOON SEE.

WILL YOU
SUCCEED?

RUPASHIKHA LEFT HIM, TO
GO TO AGNISHIKHA. SHE
WENT STRAIGHT TO THE
POINT.

FATHER,
I HAVE MET
A WONDERFUL
MAN. I MUST
MARRY HIM.

THAT IS
STRANGE,
COMING FROM
A RAKSHASI.
YOU SHOULD BE
WANTING TO
EAT HIM.

FATHER HE'S
SPECIAL, VERY
SPECIAL.

I MUST
TEST
HIM.

WELL,
IF YOU
SAY
SO.

SHRINGABHUJA WAS BROUGHT BEFORE HIM, AND THE RAKSHASA WAS ALL SMILES.

MY DAUGHTER IS YOURS, IF YOU PROMISE NEVER TO DISOBEY ME. AND NOW GO. BATHE, CHANGE AND BE BACK IN AN HOUR.

VERY WELL, SIR.

AND RUPASHIKHA, BRING YOUR SISTERS HERE.

RUPASHIKHA HURRIED OUT AND CAUGHT UP WITH SHRINGABHUJA.

I KNOW WHAT FATHER HAS IN MIND. WHEN YOU COME, THERE WILL BE A HUNDRED WOMEN ALL ALIKE. YOU WILL BE ASKED TO SINGLE ME OUT.

WHATEVER WILL I DO?

JUST LOOK OUT FOR THE ONE WITH A GARLAND OVER HER EARS. THAT WILL BE ME.

IT WAS JUST AS RUPASHIKHA HAD SAID. BUT THE RAKSHASA HAD ANOTHER TEST UP HIS SLEEVE.

TAKE THIS LOT OF SESAME SEEDS—ALL HUNDRED BAGS OF THEM—AND SOW THEM IN THE FIELD OUTSIDE THE TOWN.

YES, SIR.

AGAIN, RUPASHIKHA WAYLAID THE DEJECTED SHRINGABHUJA.

I MAY HAVE TO USE MAGIC TO COMPLETE THE TASK BUT IT WILL BE DONE!

BUT THE BATTLE OF WITS WAS NOT OVER. WHEN SHRINGABHUJA RETURNED—

I'VE CHANGED MY MIND. GO, COLLECT ALL THE SOWN SEEDS AND PILE THEM UP AGAIN IN MY GRANARY.

RUPASHIKHA CAME TO HIS RESCUE ONCE AGAIN.

EMERGE,
YOU ARMIES
OF ANTS
AND SET TO
WORK !

AND THE ANTS SCURRIED
ABOUT, COLLECTING THE
SEEDS WHICH...

...SHRINGABHUJA PRODUCED
BEFORE THE RAKSHASA.

SIR,
I HAVE
DONE THE
IMPOSSIBLE.
I HAVE
UNSOWN A
FIELD !

HE IS
EXTRAORDINARY.
BUT A FEW
MORE TASKS
WILL REALLY
TEST HIM.

JUST ONE
MORE ERRAND.
MY BROTHER LIVES
IN AN ABANDONED
SHIVA TEMPLE,
SOME MILES FROM
HERE. GO AND
INVITE HIM TO
YOUR WEDDING
TOMORROW.

RUPASHIKHA WAS MORE THAN A MATCH FOR HER SCHEMING FATHER.

MY UNCLE
WILL TRY AND
KILL YOU.
HERE—TAKE
THIS EARTH,
THIS
WATER...

...THESE
THORNS AND THIS
SMOULDERING FAGGOT.
JUST KEEP THROWING
THESE BEHIND YOU
ONE BY ONE,
EACH TIME MY
UNCLE CATCHES UP
WITH YOU.

HE RODE RUPASHIKHA'S MAGIC HORSE WITH THE SPEED OF WIND. SOON, THE DESERTED TEMPLE LOOMED BEFORE HIM, DARK AND MENACING.

DHUMASHIKHA!
YOUR BROTHER
INVITES YOU TO
THE WEDDING OF
HIS DAUGHTER,
RUPASHIKHA.

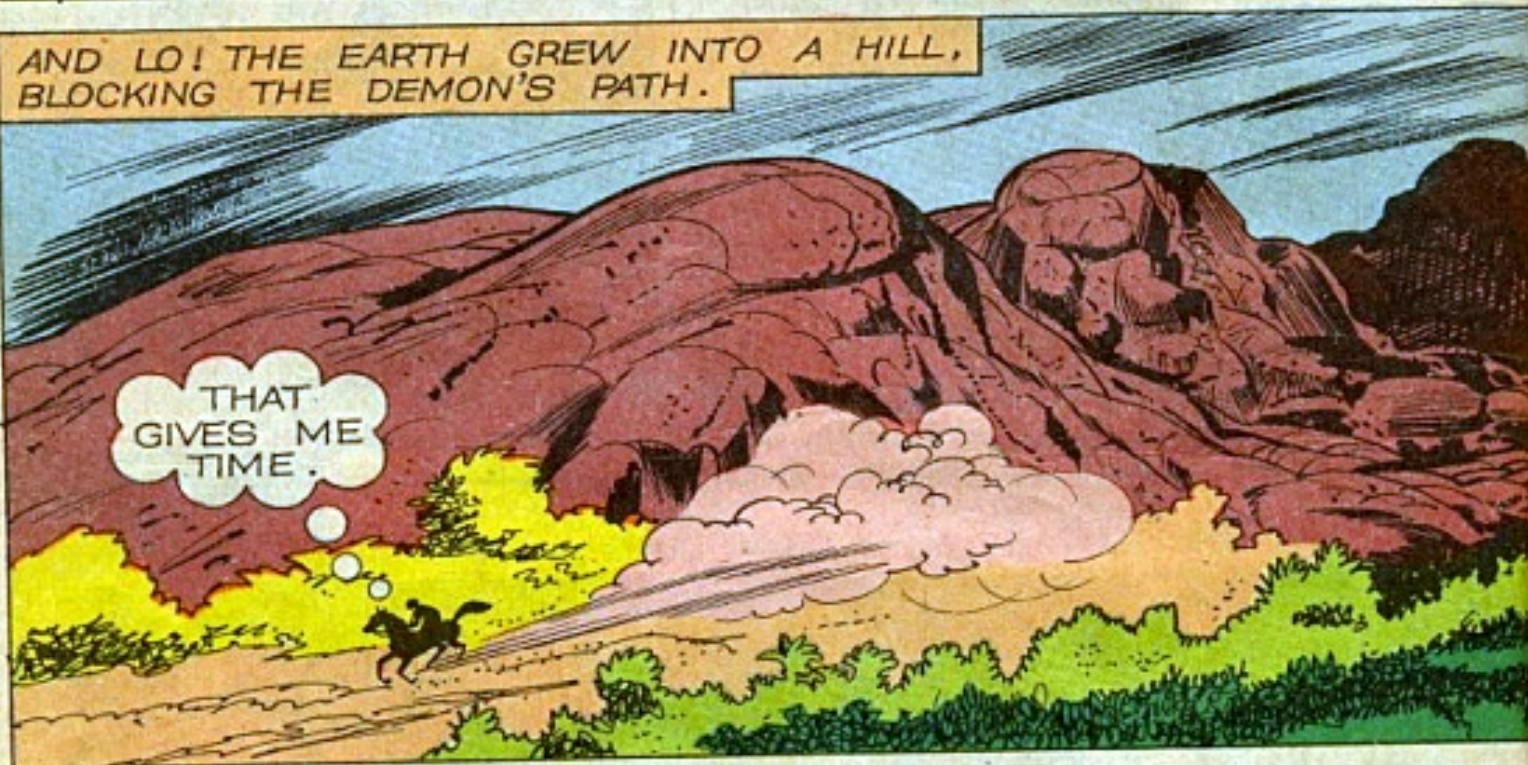
THEN, TURNING HIS HORSE, HE FLED,
URGING IT TO GO FASTER, EVER FASTER.

THERE COMES
THE OLD DEMON.
LET ME THROW
THE EARTH IN
HIS PATH.



AND LO! THE EARTH GREW INTO A HILL,
BLOCKING THE DEMON'S PATH.

THAT
GIVES ME
TIME.



A LITTLE FARTHER ON—

THERE'S
LIFE IN THE
OLD DEVIL
YET.



AND HE SPRINKLED THE
WATER BEHIND HIM...

...WHICH INSTANTLY BECAME A HUGE RIVER, EDDYING AND SWIRLING BEHIND HIM.

I'M NEARER HOME NOW, BUT STILL NOT OUT OF DANGER.

TWICE MORE HE BLOCKED THE DEMON'S PATH— ONCE WITH THE THORNS...

THIS THORN JUNGLE WILL TEAR HIM APART.

...AND FINALLY WITH THE FAGGOT WHICH SET THE SURROUNDING TREES ABLAZE.

I'M GOING BACK. THIS HUMAN BEING IS TOO MUCH HARD WORK. I'LL JUST WAIT FOR ANOTHER ONE TO COME ALONG.

AND HE WENT BACK, LEAVING SHRINGABHUJA FREE TO RETURN, TRIUMPHANT.

AS SHRINGABHUJA GALLOPED HOME—

THIS IMPOSSIBLE MAN! HOW DID HE ESCAPE MY BROTHER?

WELL DONE. NOW, YOU MAY MARRY MY DAUGHTER.

THE NEXT DAY THEY WERE MARRIED. A MONTH HAD PASSED.

RUPASHIKHA, WE MUST GET BACK TO VARDHAMANA.

THAT MEANS ANOTHER BATTLE OF WITS WITH MY FATHER.

HOW DO WE DO IT?

JUST DON'T ANNOUNCE YOUR INTENTIONS. WE'LL HAVE TO MAKE A QUICK AND QUIET EXIT.

THE NEXT DAY—

WE'RE GOING OUT FOR THE DAY INTO THE FOREST.

VERY WELL, PRINCESS.

HAVE
YOU TAKEN
THE GOLDEN
ARROW?

YES—AND
ALL MY
JEWELS. AND
WITH ME
COMES
THE RIGHT
TO HALF THE
KINGDOM.

THERE
COMES
MY FATHER
ON HIS
FLYING
HORSE.
I CAN FEEL
THE AIR
RUSTLE.

WHAT
NOW?

SHE USED HER POWERS
TO MAKE HIM AND THE
HORSE INVISIBLE...

...DISGUISED HERSELF
AS A WOODCUTTER...



...AND JOINED A WOODCUTTER WHO HAPPENED TO BE THERE. SOON—

DID YOU SEE A YOUNG COUPLE PASS THIS WAY?

WE SAW NO ONE. WE HAVE BEEN CUTTING WOOD ALL DAY— FOR KING AGNISHIKHA'S FUNERAL PYRE.



WHAT! ME, DEAD? I MUST RUSH HOME TO CHECK.

MY FOOLISH FATHER!



AND SHE JOINED SHRINGABHUJA—

SURELY, HE MUST REALIZE HE'S NOT DEAD.

RAKSHASAS ARE BIG AND FOOLISH.



AGNISHIKHA WAS SOON BACK. THIS TIME RUPASHIKHA WAS IN THE GUISE OF A MESSENGER.

DID YOU SEE A MAN AND A WOMAN GO BY?

NO, BUT THEN I AM SO FULL OF MY OWN SORROW I DON'T SEE ANYTHING. I'M CARRYING A MESSAGE— KING AGNISHIKHA IS ILL AND DYING.





AT VARDHAMANA, SHRINGABHUJA HAD ARRIVED AND EVERYTHING WAS TOLD.



HE PLIED HER
WITH WINE.

COME,
DRINK, MY
QUEEN.



SOON SHE WAS
ASLEEP — AND
MUMBLING.

GUNAVARA,
IF YOU WERE
NOT IN THAT
DUNGEON,
WOULD THE
KING BE
HERE?

AHA!
THE
WITCH.



THE KING ACTED
QUICKLY. HE FREED
GUNAVARA,
RELATING ALL
THAT HAD
HAPPENED.

THE WITCHES!
I'LL IMPRISON
THE LOT.

FORGIVE
THEM, MY
LORD.



THE NEXT DAY, SHRINGABHUJA WAS
ANOINTED CROWN PRINCE AND ALL
WAS WELL IN THE ROYAL HOUSEHOLD
OF VARDHAMANA ONCE AGAIN.

GOD
BLESS YOU,
MY SON.

